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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT LOUIS 000218

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA, S/P, L
CJTF HOA FOR RADM KURTA AND DR. LIST
PLEASE PASS TO CDR MOUM USS ARLEIGH BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2010
TAGS: [PHSA](#) [PBTS](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [EWWT](#) [SE](#)
SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES SEEKS GREATER US TIES IN CDA MEETING
WITH PRESIDENT

REF: A. PORT LOUIS 132
[B](#). PORT LOUIS 137
[C](#). PORT LOUIS 205

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Virginia M. Blaser for reasons 1.4(b)
and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Charge D'Affaires Virginia Blaser's June 30 courtesy call on President James Michel celebrated the U.S. - Seychelles bilateral relationship and addressed cooperative efforts to combat piracy and secure the seas. Set against the festive backdrop of the first July 4th celebration the Embassy held in Seychelles in many years and a USDEL including CJTF-HOA senior staff, RDML Anthony Kurta and Dr. Kathleen List, as well as CDR Brian Moum of the USS Arleigh Burke, the cordial discussion reflected a strong Government of Seychelles desire for increased military assistance.

PRESIDENT EXPRESSES NEED TO CONCLUDE SOFA

[1](#)2. (SBU) The June 30 meeting began with CDA congratulating Michel on the return of the seven Seychellois hostages taken by Somali pirates on April 1 while aboard the "Indian Ocean Explorer," and expressing hope that the remaining three Seychellois hostages in Somalia are returned. Michel expressed satisfaction over the safe return of the seven Seychellois, but assured CDA that the GOS is not satisfied and will work, with allies, for the return of the remaining three and to combat piracy in Indian Ocean waters. Michel immediately turned to the proposed Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), saying it will foster growth in the U.S. - Seychelles bilateral relationship. When the CDA noted that a SOFA is within reach, Michel responded emphatically that "we have to make it happen."

[1](#)3. (U) Michel praised the U.S. for its current contributions to peace and security in the region, frequent naval ship visits to Port Victoria, and resources and training it gives to Seychelles' officials and citizens. RDML Kurta, in response, thanked Michel for allowing our ships to visit and taking care of visiting service members. He reaffirmed the mutual benefit derived from joint training exercises such as the ones conducted between the visiting Africa Partnership Station (USS Arleigh Burke) and the Seychelles People Defense Forces (SPDF). Agreeing with Michel, he concluded: "the SOFA

agreement is the key to a better bilateral relationship."

PIRACY PLANS AND COOPERATION

¶4. (C) CDA Blaser then asked for an update on piracy since her last discussion with Michel. The weather created by the Southeast Monsoon has decreased pirate activity in the region, he replied, giving the GOS time to assess plans and then move forward. Michel said this "eye of the storm" in no way signaled an end to the long-term challenge of piracy. The President's Principal Secretary John-Paul Adam concurred, pointing to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) losing ground in Somalia and conversations he had with the recently released Seychellois hostages, in which they said that pirates planned on moving further out from Somalia and even deeper into Seychelles' territorial waters.

¶5. (C) Adam continued outlining why the approach must be "long-term," centering on the effects piracy has on the Seychelles' economy. Adam said that compared to last year, revenue for the fishing sector was down a third, due to piracy around Seychelles causing ships to leave for safer waters in the Mozambique channel or closer to Mauritius. To illustrate the multiple effects piracy has on a maritime-based economy like Seychelles, Adam further mentioned the loss of revenue in tourism by yachts choosing other routes, lost fueling revenues, and an increase in the unemployment of local stevedores.

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¶6. (C) Michel said GOS planning for a potential resurgence in piracy after the Southeast Monsoon depends heavily on cooperation from friends. Adam elaborated that this cooperation must be in capturing, prosecuting, and holding the pirates. He specified that GOS seeks to work with regional partners and international partners in the area, such as ATALANTA forces. According to Adam, European partners have not helped GOS nearly enough, especially when it comes to assistance in the judicial process. Adam noted, however, that EU naval forces have taken one positive step by agreeing to move further south and help patrol northern Seychellois waters and fishing grounds.

¶7. (C) Mauritius seems to be helping Seychelles push piracy onto the agenda in international fora, such as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Adam said. Mauritius engaged in positive piracy discussions between Michel and Prime Minister Ramgoolam during South African president Zuma's inauguration, he added, but the scale of resources and expertise needed is far beyond Seychelles and Mauritius.

¶8. (C) Adam noted that only minimal technical assistance had been given by the EU in the current piracy trials. He said members of ATALANTA forces were paying the costs of testimony for crew members in the recent cases against the alleged pirates, but need to do more to ensure due process is given in court procedures and to provide resources to Seychelles to hold pirates. Despite these challenges, he expressed confidence that GOS would be able to successfully prosecute most of the pirates under what he referred to as the "piracy and hijacking" charter, while the remaining three of the 22 alleged pirates in custody will be charged with illegal immigration.

¶9. (C) CDA gave CDR Moum an opportunity to highlight his boarding officer course that will train over 30 members of the SPDF. When he reaffirmed that we are at a pivotal moment that could "fundamentally change our bilateral relationship," Michel responded that "in challenges lie opportunities." One such opportunity, the CDA pointed out, is in the possibility of Djibouti-based P-3 airplanes, the main aircraft being used in anti-piracy efforts, landing and refueling in Seychelles

to broaden their coverage area. Adam strongly encouraging the Seychelles as a place for turning P-3s, stating that Seychelles' refueling options were among the best.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) COMMENT: Seychelles has a long and positive history of cooperation with the U.S. Many Seychellois fondly remember the former U.S. tracking station based in Seychelles, and frequently ask when the U.S. will return in a more permanent capacity. This positive history coupled with the direct threat piracy poses to the country's livelihood has made the country's top officials, to include the President, eager to cooperate with the USG in anti-piracy efforts and increase U.S. presence in the region. The President also appears to be seeking to capitalize on the public's perception of the U.S as an ally who can provide some expertise to aid GOS struggle against the impact of piracy. Making this connection, in particular with a passage of the long-awaited SOFA, would allow the President to show his voting public that he can create stronger alliances that directly help his people and his nations economy. END COMMENT.
BLASER